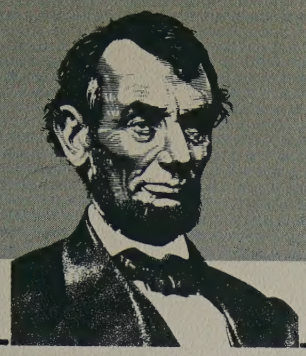

Lincoln Lore

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THOMAS LINCOLN'S CORNER CUPBOARDS

Cabinet making was one of Thomas Lincoln's sources of income and the production of corner cupboards seemed to have been his specialty. Pertinent facts supporting the claim that Thomas Lincoln was a carpenter and cabinetmaker are to be found in *Lincoln Lore*, Number 503, February 6, 1939, entitled, "The Elizabethtown Carpenter."

Eight Thomas Lincoln corner cupboards are known to be extant:

I. The Lincoln-Cowley-Viers-Garner cupboard of cherry wood owned by R. Gerald McMurtry of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

II. The Decker-Kenneday-Crawford cupboard of cherry wood owned by Miss Minnie Patterson of Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

III. The Turnham-Johnson cupboard of walnut wood in the Evansville, Indiana, Public Museum.

IV. The Dever cupboard of walnut wood bearing Thomas Lincoln's initials and date of construction in the Speed Museum of Louisville, Kentucky.

V. The Crawford-Meece-Brown cupboard of walnut wood with the initials "E. C." on the door in the Rockport, Indiana courthouse museum.

VI. The Crawford-Jennings-Cryderman cupboard of walnut wood now in the Ford Museum of Dearborn, Michigan.

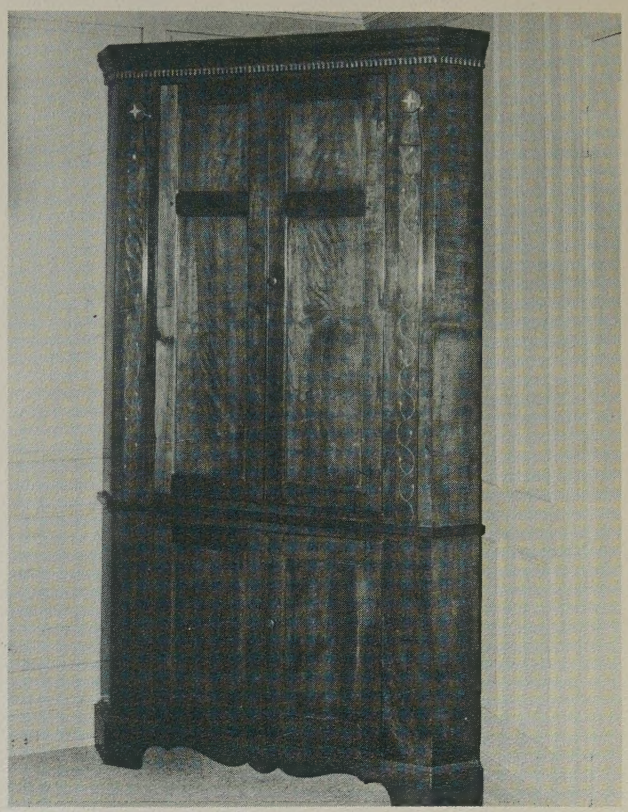
VII. The Reuben Grigsby-Helverson cupboard of cherry wood owned by Mrs. Gertrude E. Smith Savage Helverson of Mount Vernon, Illinois.

VIII. The Aaron Grigsby-Wetherill cupboard of walnut wood owned by the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In addition to the eight corner cupboards there are several other pieces of cabinet work still extant in Kentucky, Indiana and possibly Illinois, which Thomas Lincoln is known to have constructed. These include cherry spool beds, mantlepieces, desks, bookcases, chests and sideboards.

The father of the sixteenth president was said to have owned one of the best sets of carpenter's tools in Hardin County, Kentucky. This fact is borne out, to some extent, by Thomas' purchases at the Bleakley and Montgomery store in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. On August 1, 1804 he purchased "1 casteel saw" for which he paid the sum of eighteen shillings (one shilling was then worth about twenty cents). At another time during the year 1804 Lincoln bought one plane bit (one shilling and sixpence) and one file at the same price. In February, 1805 Lincoln purchased a saw for nine shillings and another file. At Thomas Mc Intire's sale in 1807 he bought an old sword which he may have converted into a drawing knife. Other Bleakley and Montgomery ledger records indicate that this Elizabethtown cabinetmaker purchased sandpaper, screws and a gimlet.

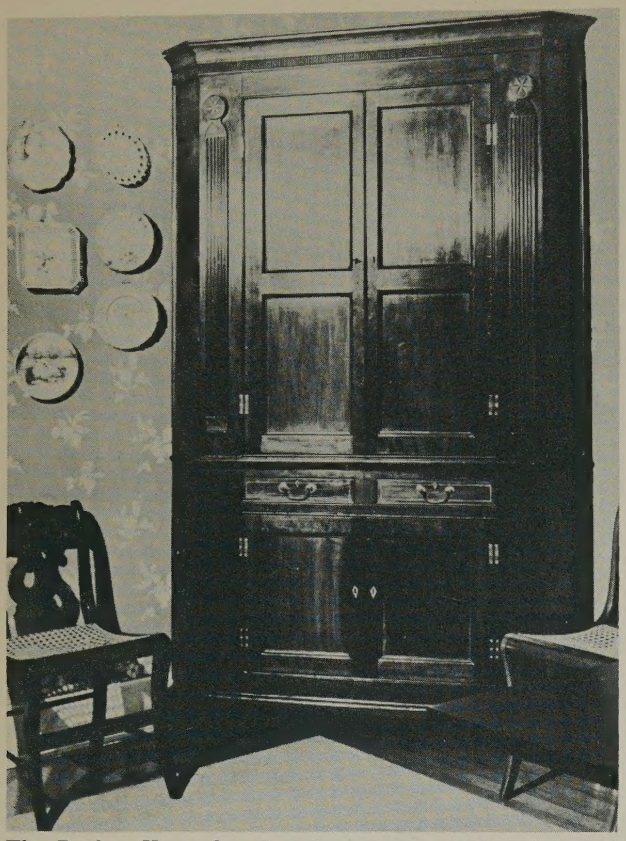
Unlike most pioneer cabinetmakers Thomas Lincoln had some artistic idiosyncrasies. He was particularly fond of an inlaid pattern known as "star and streamer" and he also employed the "hole and tooth" design on some of his cupboards. While cabinetmakers would invariably apply their inlays to the cabinet proper, Tom Lincoln, except in one instance, attached inlaid strips to the cupboard facings. In fact, this idiosyncrasy in some cases has enabled collectors to identify the work of this pioneer cabinetmaker.



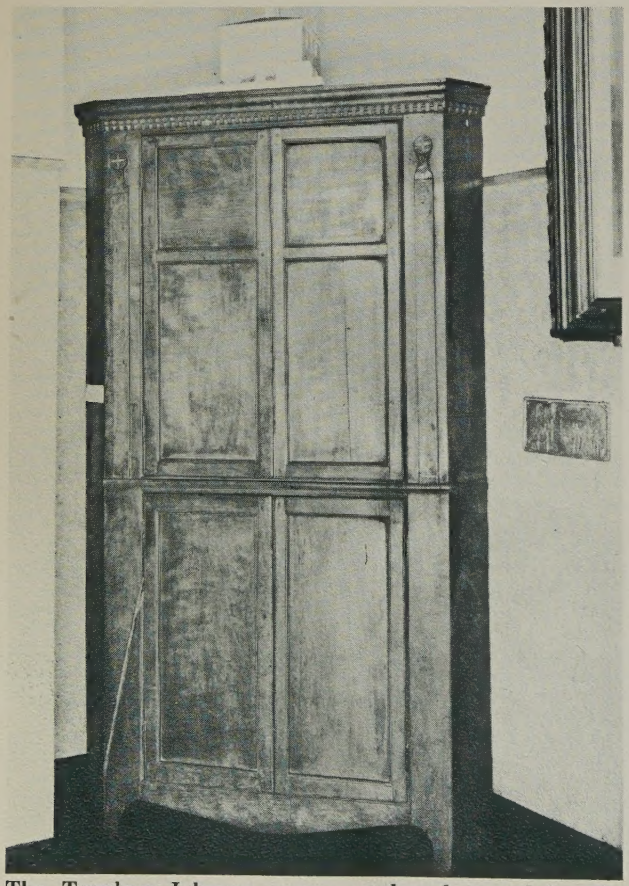
The Lincoln-Cowley-Viers-Garner corner cupboard owned by R. Gerald McMurtry of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Inlaid strips of the "star and streamer" design appear on the cupboards designated I, II, (with distinct variations), III and V (not on strips but on the jamb facings). The "hole and tooth" design appears on cupboards I, II, III, V, and VI. So far as this writer knows, and an extensive search has been made, only Thomas Lincoln of all the pioneer cabinetmakers, attached the inlaid strips to his corner cupboard facings. Perhaps, a cabinetmaker's skill can best be determined by his inlay and if this is the case, Thomas Lincoln excelled in his profession.

Several of Thomas Lincoln's corner cupboards have been carefully examined to determine the degree of his workmanship. While all of the cupboards examined reveal the use of pioneer tools, which precludes rough details in the interior of the cabinets, the exteriors of the products are finely wrought. Thomas Lincoln used no nails (except the Crawford-Jennings-Cryderman cupboard is said to have in its interior construction handmade



The Decker Kenneday-Crawford corner cupboard owned by Miss Minnie Patterson of Elizabethtown, Kentucky.



The Turnham-Johnson corner cupboard owned by the Evansville Public Museum.

wrought-iron nails) in his furniture and his use of wooden pegs added to the attractiveness of these historic antiques.

I

There is a remote possibility that the Lincoln-Cowley-Viers-Garner cupboard of cherry wood was used in the Lincoln household. While affidavits must be taken for what they are worth, there is a tradition properly notarized that the Lincoln's owned this cupboard while residing at Knob Creek (now Larue County) in Kentucky.

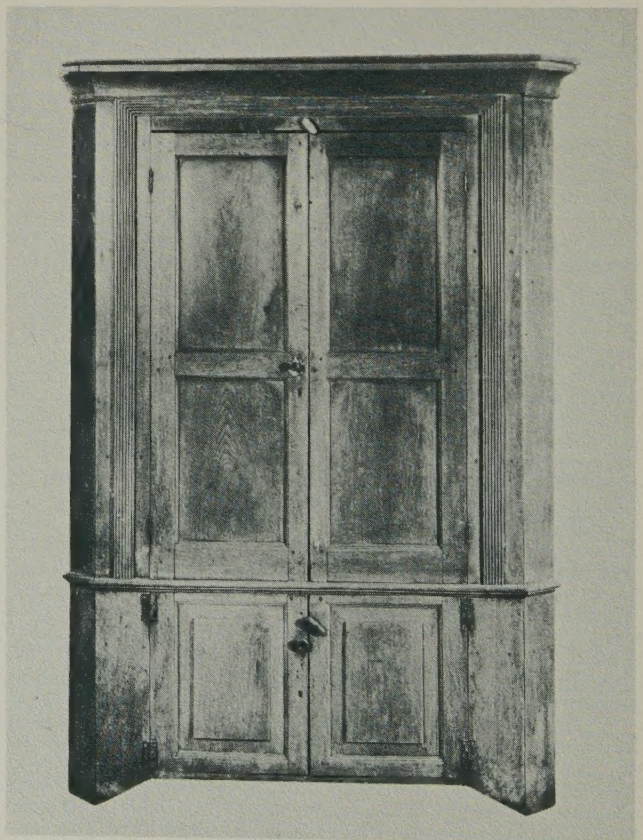
The legend persists in the Mill Creek (Hardin County) country that the Lincolns traveled to Indiana in the late fall of 1816 by horse and wagon. Enroute to Indiana, by way of Mill Creek, while fording one of the swollen streams, the cupboard toppled out of the wagon into the creek and was abandoned. After the flood subsided the cupboard was taken from the creek and became the property of John T. Cowley. Later the cupboard was sold at the Cowley sale to Mrs. Martha Viers for fifty cents. Mrs. Viers then gave the piece of furniture to Mrs. Amos Garner, and it was from Mrs. Garner that the writer purchased this antique on August 23, 1938.

This cupboard is beautifully constructed. The interior is made of wide poplar boards and the front is skillfully decorated with the "hole and tooth" inlay as well as the strips with the "star and streamer" design.

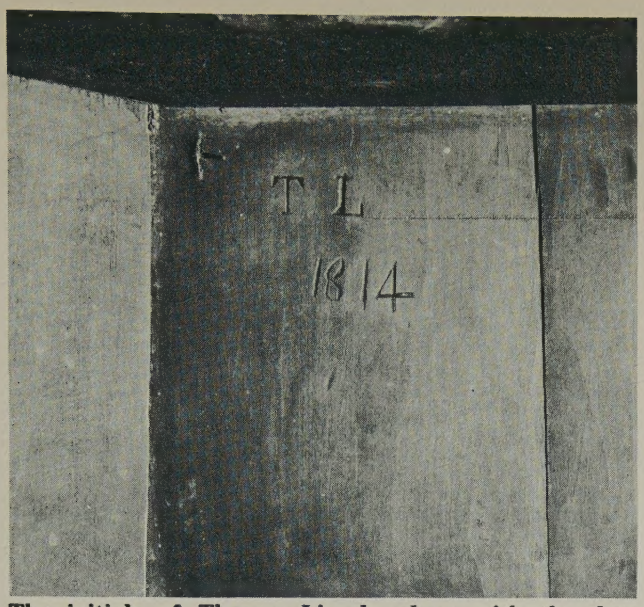
II

The Decker-Kenneday-Crawford cupboard of cherry wood is owned by Miss Minnie Patterson of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The history of this cupboard reveals that it was made by Thomas Lincoln while he resided in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, about 1807 or 1808 (these dates appear in the affidavit). The affidavit dated August 4, 1945 and signed by Misses Sallie G. Hart and Maggie C. Hart follows in part:

"Affiants say that they are daughters of the late John Hart, who moved to a farm on Youngers Creek in Hardin County, a year or two prior to 1860; that the Decker Kenneday family then resided in the immediate vicinity of the farm of their father and the two families became intimately acquainted with each other; that they heard their father and mother state on several occasions that the cherry corner



The Dever corner cupboard owned by The J. B. Speed Memorial Museum of Louisville, Kentucky.



The initials of Thomas Lincoln along with the date of construction of the Dever corner cupboard owned by The J. B. Speed Memorial Museum of Louisville, Kentucky.

cupboard then in the possession of the Decker Kenneday family was made by Thomas Lincoln while he resided in Elizabethtown; that Mollie Kenneday, and other members of the Decker Kenneday family have told affiants that said cupboard had been in the family for many years and was made by Thomas Lincoln.

"Affiants further state that when the Kenneday family moved from said farm the said corner cupboard was left in the house which was immediately thereafter occupied by John Crawford, who now resides on the Bardstown Road about six miles north of Elizabethtown, that Minnie Patterson purchased said cupboard from said John Crawford."

This cupboard has been beautifully refinished and in its decoration Thomas Lincoln embodied an interesting carved design across the top front and sides. Again, in the construction of this cupboard he employed the strips on the jamb facings, although they were carved instead of inlaid. However, he did use at the top of the strips a variation of the "star" inlay. Two drawers add to the attractiveness of this cupboard.

III

The Turnham-Johnson cupboard of walnut wood in the Evansville, Indiana, Public Museum is almost identical in construction to the Lincoln-Cowley-Viers-Garner cupboard. Both cabinets have the identical inlaid designs. This cupboard was made by Thomas Lincoln for David Turnham, who always insisted that young Abraham helped in its construction.

According to relatives of Turnham the walnut lumber used in the construction of this cupboard was cut on the Turnham farm. This cupboard was never out of the hands of the Turnham family until it was placed in the Evansville Public Museum.

IV

The Dever cupboard of walnut in the Speed Museum of Louisville, Kentucky is perhaps the best identified of all of Thomas Lincoln's cabinet work. This cupboard bears Thomas Lincoln's initials and the date of its construction. It was secured for the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum from J. O. Dever of Summit, Hardin County, Kentucky, whose family owned it over a century. Four affidavits certify its authenticity, and the fact that Dever's grandfather came into possession of it in 1830.

The black walnut wood is put together with pegs. Both the main portion above and the hutch below have double doors (which is true of all the eight cupboards) and the doors are panelled. On this cupboard a line decoration extends across the top and down either side of the upper portion. Inside the upper part of the cabinet the initials T. L. and the date 1814 are carved.

V

The Crawford-Meece-Brown cupboard of walnut wood with the initials "E. C." (Elizabeth Crawford) on the door is in the Rockport, Indiana courthouse museum. This cupboard was first described by Ida M. Tarbell in an article entitled "Lincoln's Second Mother," *The Boston Globe*, April 22, 1923. The same statement also appeared in Miss Tarbell's "In The Footsteps Of The Lincolns," Harper & Brothers, 1924, pages 132-133.

This cupboard was first exhibited in 1921 when Charles Brown placed it in the Rockport courthouse. He purchased it from a Mrs. Meece, a granddaughter of Josiah Crawford, and was informed that the cupboard was the work of Thomas Lincoln. While there is some confusion in regard to the authenticity of this cupboard (Thomas Summers an uncle of Mrs. Crawford may have assisted Thomas Lincoln in its construction) it has all the earmarks of the president's father's handiwork. The "streamer" inlay falls directly below the "star" and the design, unlike the others, is directly on the door jambs and not on strips. The "hole and tooth" design appears on the top cornice.

VI

The Crawford-Jennings-Cryderman cupboard of walnut wood has received wide publicity. Unfortunately the cabinet work has often been erroneously identified as that of Abraham Lincoln's. Apparently the cupboard was made by Thomas Lincoln for Josiah and Elizabeth Crawford. Upon the death of the Crawfords the cupboard became the property of their daughter, Mrs. Ruth Crawford Jennings, Spencer County, Indiana. Mrs. Jennings sold the cupboard to her son, Samuel Hatzel Jennings of Rockport, Indiana. In 1918 the cupboard was purchased from the Jenning's estate by his daughter, Mrs. Maude Jennings Cryderman, a great-granddaughter of Josiah and Elizabeth Crawford.

In February 1919, on the occasion of President Lincoln's 110th birthday anniversary, the cupboard was shipped by special request to the National Old Soldiers Home at Satelle, California. From the Old Soldiers Home, where

The Crawford-Jennings-Cryderman corner cupboard owned by The Edison Institute of Dearborn, Michigan.

it was exhibited, the cupboard was sent to Los Angeles and placed on exhibition in the Historical Room of the Museum of History, Science and Art.

The cupboard is described as being made of "solid native walnut." "It stands seven feet high and weighs over three hundred pounds . . . There are two sets of doors (four in all) which are nicely panelled and there is a strip of hand carving (hole with tooth inlay) across the front of the cupboard above the upper set of doors. The entire front is put together with walnut pegs while the back is fastened with hand-made wrought-iron nails. Old fashioned brass hinges support the doors." Along the upper sides of the cupboard is some handsome carving which greatly enhance the beauty of this piece of furniture.

This cupboard is now permanently exhibited in the Edison Institute at Dearborn, Michigan. While Ford representatives have not disclosed the purchase price (purchased in 1932 or 1933) the figure mentioned most often is $25,000.

VII

The Reuben Grigsby-Helverson corner cupboard of cherry wood, with only a cornice decoration, is owned by Mrs. Gertrude E. (Smith) Savage Helverson of Mount Vernon, Illinois. Her son, writing from Mount Vernon, Illinois, on October 5, 1945 made the following statement: "My mother's grandmother was a sister to Aaron Grigsby who, of course, married Sarah Lincoln. Thomas Lincoln worked for Reuben Grigsby, father of Aaron, and during this period constructed two corner cupboards. One of these was given to Sarah Lincoln and Aaron Grigsby to start housekeeping . . . The other was for the use of Reuben Grigsby and his family, which cupboard has been handed down until now my mother has it in her possession.

"We have affidavits to this effect from persons most likely to know in the area of Spencer County, Indiana, where Abraham Lincoln spent his boyhood. These affiants are nine in number (in 1960 eleven affidavits are introduced as evidence) and they range in age from 50 to 78, the majority being in the neighborhood of 70 years of age. In addition, my mother has prepared a separate affidavit setting the facts out as she knows them."

The cabinet is described as being "constructed in Spencer County, Indiana, and is approximately seven feet in height and has a triangular back which will allow it to fit into any corner, as was common in the times in which it was built." In August 1960 the cupboard was still available for sale at the price of $10,000 which the owner believed to be reasonable for a relic so valuable.

VIII

The Aaron Grigsby-Wetherill corner cupboard is now in the possession of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. This is the cupboard mentioned in the Helverson statement (No. VII). The provenance of this cupboard reveals that it passed from Aaron Grigsby to R. D. Wetherill, a son-in-law, and in turn to his son, George Wetherill. It was purchased from George of Boonville, Indiana, in 1931 or 1932 by an antique dealer. After the death of the antique dealer (name unknown) the cupboard was acquired by an Ann Arbor man who gave it to the University of Michigan in 1949 and it was moved to the Clements Library.

The cupboard is made of walnut wood. The workmanship is rather crude and it is in poor condition. It is without trim and has two solid doors above, a single drawer, and two smaller drawers below. This construction may have been the result of a special request by either Aaron or Sarah Grigsby. No photographs of this cupboard are obtainable, and a minute description of its characteristics is not available.

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R. G. M.

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COMMAGER, HENRY STEELE **1960-59**

The Great/Proclamation/A Book for Young Americans/by/Henry Steele Commager/The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc./A Subsidiary of Howard W. Sams & Co., Inc./Publishers. Indianapolis. New York.
Book, cloth, 6" x 9¼", 112 pp., fr., illus., price $2.95.

DORRIS, JONATHAN T. **1960-60**

The Treatment of Confederates/by Lincoln, Johnson and/Congress, 1861-1898/by Jonathan T. Dorris/Reprinted from three numbers of the Lincoln Herald, 1959-60/edited by Dr. Wayne C. Temple of Lincoln Memorial University/(Cover title).
Pamphlet, paper, 7" x 10", 32 pp.

HAYES, MELVIN L. **1960-61**

Mr. Lincoln/Runs for President/To The Polls Ye Sons Of Freedom/by Melvin L. Hayes/The Citadel Press, New York.
Book, cloth, 5½" x 8½", 352 pp., illus., price $5.00.

UNITED STATES LINCOLN SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMISSION **1960-62**

Abraham Lincoln/Sesquicentennial/1959-1960/(seal)/Final Report/of the/Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission/Washington, D. C.
Book, cloth, 6" x 9¼", xvi p., 193 pp., fr., illus.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS **1960-63**

The Library of Congress. Presidents' Papers Index Series/Index to the Abraham Lincoln/Papers/(seal)/Manuscript Division. Reference Department/Library of Congress/Washington 1960.
Book, paper, 9" x 11½", x p., 124 pp. Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D. C., price $1.00.

McCLURE, STANLEY **1960-64**

The/Lincoln Museum/and the/House Where Lincoln Died/Washington, D. C./by Stanley W. McClure/(drawing showing axe splitting log)/National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 2/Washington, D. C., 1949/(Revised 1960).
Pamphlet, flexible boards, 6" x 9", 42 pp., fr., illus., price 25¢.

NEWMAN, RALPH G. **1960-65**

Lincoln/For/The Ages/Edited and with an Introduction by/Ralph G. Newman/Foreword by David C. Mearns/Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York/1960.
Book, cloth, 6½" x 9½", 519 pp. 525 copies specially bound, boxed and signed. 200 for sale, price $10.00.

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Lincoln/For The Ages/Edited and with an Introduction by/Ralph G. Newman/Foreword by David C. Mearns/Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York/1960.
Book, cloth, 6¼" x 9½", 519 pp., regular edition.

STERN, PHILIP VAN DOREN **1960-66**

Abraham Lincoln/A biography in Pictures/(Lincoln Memorial interior view)/by Philip Van Doren Stern/(Cover title).
Pamphlet, paper, 5" x 8¼", 15 pp., illus. Copyright, 1960 by Birk & Co., Inc., Publishers, 3 E. 57th St., New York 19, N. Y.

TEMPLE, WAYNE C. **1960-67**

Lincoln's Marriage Ceremony/Edited by/Wayne C. Temple, Ph.D./Director/Department of Lincolniana/Lincoln Memorial University/Limited Edition Published for the Members of the/National Lincoln-Civil War Council/Lincoln Memorial University Press/Harrogate, Tennessee/1960/(Cover title).
Pamphlet, paper, 6" x 9", 7 pp., Limited to 250 copies.